













**WED, FEB 23RD, 4:30PM**

**TOM NAGY**

**SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER**  
**RESTORATION ECOLOGIST**  
**BGYN ALUMNUS**  
**COMMERCIAL BREWER**

**AGES 14-24 - ALL ARE WELCOME, ZOOM LINK IN BIO**

### **BGYN Guest Speaker - Tom Nagy**

-  Currently living in Winnipeg
-  Doesn't own a car, uses a cool [car-share](#) co-op in the City.
-  Random fact, if you look on a map...the southern most tip of Ontario "Pelee Island" is about aligned horizontally with the north part of California. We live in a very unique climate - Carolinian Forest
-  100-120 species of trees → a hotspot for botanical diversity
-  Tom began learning about different species of trees and sharing with others (including through the BGYN while he was still in HS)
-  Had a great reaction from others, which helped fuel his passion
  
-  **Wild Foraging:** He started eating and making medicine of wild plants and organisms
-  Acorns are actually very healthy, has made acorn flour
-  "Don't people know this?" "Why isn't everyone else out here?"
-  Information wasn't really out there - how to find, process, respect the plants, etc.

- 🍄 This made him care about it even more. ALL food comes from plants, even animal products!
- 🍄 Plans his year around where and when certain plants are going to be available

🍄 **Plant Taxonomy + Ecological Restoration:** began in high school through summer jobs at Algonquin Provincial Park

- 🍄 Formally trained as a Restoration Ecologist at [Sir Sanford Fleming College](#) in Peterborough
  - Studied Benthic Macro Invertebrates
  - They are great indicators of water quality
  - Lots of water and soil testing
  - Learning how to answer the question of “HOW do I know if this is a healthy ecosystem?”
  - Lots of practice with grant writing
- 🍄 College was his first “away from home experience”
  - How to “adult”
  - Feeding yourself, can go to bed at any time, no one to make him do assignments
  - Suggestion: Travel if possible, live away from home if you can. It was a great help for him
- 🍄 Enjoyed learning about animal tracking in school
- 🍄 After college, moved back to Hamilton for proximity to family

🍄 Upon return, worked as a **Field Botanist at the RBG** in the Herbarium (plant library)

- 🍄 Learned more about scientific identification of plants
- 🍄 Each entry told a story, where it was collected, sometimes with GPS locations
- 🍄 Entries from the 1700s, 1800s
- 🍄 A show and tell of different local plants like chokeberry, shagbark hickory that sparked his interests

🍄 Has worked at [Heart's Content Organic Farm](#), run by Richard and Ella as a **Field Manager**

- 🍄 Was responsible for things like the seed schedule, crop rotation strategies, etc
- 🍄 Got to live in a 100+ year old farmhouse
- 🍄 Was able to receive a much better idea of how much effort it takes to get food on our plates
- 🍄 Worked 5 acres of farmland with basically just hand tools
- 🍄 Thinks “weed” is a bad word, doesn't like to demonize. A weed is basically any plant growing where you don't specifically want it to grow
- 🍄 Suggests people try [wwoofing](#) – which is basically a program designed to help you volunteer at organic farms around the world
- 🍄 His farm has 2 beautiful Belgian draft horses, learned from other farmers how to hook up equipment
- 🍄 Jokes that he learned how to drive horses before learning how to drive a car
- 🍄 The next chapter of his journey involved him working as a **Commercial Brewer**
- 🍄 Currently working full time as a brewer and is able to combine experiences and passions
- 🍄 Created a shitake mushroom based beer that drew strong opinions on both sides of the spectrum
- 🍄 A local farmer takes their spend grains and feeds to pigs and cows
- 🍄 Seeing the industrial process has made him a much more conscious consumer – how many resources are used in such a huge scale
- 🍄 He is working on advocating within brewery for better practices

🍄 **River City Mushrooms:** A Passion Project

- 🍄 Tom LOVES mushrooms – they are the fundamental decomposers for planet Earth
- 🍄 Recycling nutrients trapped in organisms. One of Nature's most incredible chemists
- 🍄 Now making faux-leather out of Reishi Mushroom Mycellium
  - Kale shows off a new “mushroom and pineapple leather” backpack he got for Xmas
- 🍄 Mushrooms → Mycellium is like Apple → Apple tree. Mushrooms are the “fruit” or means of reproduction
- 🍄 Group has a focus on Advocacy

- 🍄 “Surely I’m not the only one enthralled by the magic of mushrooms?”
- 🍄 Created his own biochemistry set-up in his home – is one of the only sources of cultures and mycellium
- 🍄 Being able to share and give people access to this stuff brings him incredible joy
- 🍄 If you garden, you’re ¾ of the way there
- 🍄 The fire that feeds his passion is sharing with others
- 🍄 Tom recommends everyone watch “Fantastic Fungi” on Netflix
- 🍄 We are still learning of different ways that we can use fungi as food, medicine and textiles
- 🍄 Currently on the leading edge of knowledge and we are still learning so much

### General Wisdom:

- 🍄 Live by example – Be the change you want to see
- 🍄 Be passionate and well informed
- 🍄 Contribute in your workplaces
- 🍄 Collaboration is MUCH better than competition
- 🍄 Used to think he was “way too shy and introverted”, but “mushrooms encouraged me to be that kind of person”
- 🍄 He followed his passion and what made him excited, “who knows where this is going to take me”
- 🍄 Stay Curious. Learn, and share that information with other people
- 🍄 Challenge yourself. Challenge society. Challenge societal norms.
- 🍄 Put your voice out there. Have some fun!
- 🍄 “If you can grow out your hair, do it!”
- 🍄 Join a [CSA](#) – you can find a list of Halton, Hamilton and Niagara CSAs [here](#)
- 🍄 Check out a map of local Halton Farms [here](#)
- 🍄 Food Delivery and CSA programs – broader range - [here](#)